

Tips to secure your home prior to lengthy absence

I have been asked several times for a preparation list of things to do before leaving your home unoccupied. So, I have compiled a few basic ideas in list form to help make your home secure while away.

Indoor preparations

- Set up a light timer (available at most hardware stores):
 - Memory switch light timers: memorizes your lighting habit for a few days and then repeats them while you are away from your home (replaces regular light switch and requires wiring).
 - Photo-cell plugs: (plugs into electrical outlet with light and turns on when it senses darkness).
- Partially open blinds and curtains.
- Forward home phone to a cell phone or another family member's residence.
- Turn telephone ringer down or off before leaving.
- Secure windows and sliding glass doors with an auxiliary lock and piece of wood dowel in the track.
- Install 2-inch screws in the top track of your sliding glass door and windows to stop an intruder from lifting the door or window completely out of the track.
- Secure automatic garage doors: pull plug on the electric overhead opener, disabling the unit; secure manual garage doors; wedge 2 x 4's between the top of the door and the ceiling of the garage.

Outdoor preparations

- Install motion detectors high enough so that the bulbs can't be unscrewed by a possible intruder.
- Secure doors: deadbolt locks with one-inch bolt should be installed on all exterior doors. High security strike plates should be installed on all door frames with three-inch screws giving better support to the frame.
- Alarm system: test system before leaving; arm system before leaving.
- Display deterrent signs such as "Beware of Dog" or alarm-company signage.
- Hide garbage cans in garage or basement.

- Lock up all ladders, tools, or other objects that can aid in a break-in.
- Install door viewers.

Other preparations

- Arrange for a trusted neighbour or family member to cut lawn and water plants, pick up mail and community newspapers/flyers, and check house every three days.
- Have someone park their car in your driveway from time to time to make it look like someone's home.
- Leave a number you can be reached at in an emergency.
- Have someone put their garbage out on your property for pick-up.
- If you don't feel comfortable with your neighbours, don't tell them your plans.
- Trim shrubbery near home entrance and walkways.
- Review insurance policy.
- Ask about security system incentives.
- Take a home video of home furnishing and valuables, then store it off your premises.

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